



Netwatch

By Jim Carroll

Your guide to business & accounting on the Internet

Lost in translation

With Internet-based communication playing a significant role in the global economy and in our day-to-day lives, many of us will likely have received an e-mail written in a language we aren't familiar with, or have come across a website that looks promising — if only we could read it.

While some of us are comfortable with multiple languages, many of us are not. No problem, if you take the time to learn about some of the Internet's free Web translation services. Although the translations offered by these sites are far from perfect, they will help you get the general gist of the Web page you're looking at or of the e-mail message you've received.

Perhaps one of the best such translation services is Babel Fish. It is named after the mythical small animal featured in the *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* that, once inserted into your ear, provides you with an automatic translation of anything you hear.

There are two ways to use Babel Fish for translating. First, if you have received an e-mail or have some other text that you want translated, simply cut and paste

it into the Babel Fish website, choose the language conversion you want, and in a second or two you'll see a passable translation. Second, if there's a foreign language website you want to translate, simply provide the Web address to Babel Fish. In a few moments, you'll see a version of the Web page that has been translated into English or French (or any one of several other languages, if you are interested).

There are a variety of translation tools on the Web that are similar to Babel Fish, such as Voila (specializing in French translation); Prompt's Online Translator, focusing on Russian; and T-Mail, which allows for Chinese, Korean and Japanese translations in addition to those offered by Babel Fish.

If you are trying to translate a language that is ob-

scure or less commonly used, you may have to do some detective work on the Web to see if there is a translator for the language in question. One useful site for such translation services is at For-

foreignword, where you can undertake a direct translation for 38 different languages by utilizing a number of different services. (If you'd like to discover the websites that Foreignword uses for this purpose, choose the Text Translation option, specify the source and target languages, and press the "information" icon for any listed service. This will provide you with a link to the website that features that particular translation.)

Another way to deal with the translation issue is by using popular search engine Google. You might have never noticed it, but if you use Google and it returns a Web page that is in French, German, Italian, Spanish or Portuguese, it will offer to provide you with an English translation. (Look for the "Translate this page" option next to the search result listing.)

Last but not least, for a rather innovative approach to online translation, visit Gist-In-Time, a service that automatically translates a website as you work your way through it.

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BEST LANGUAGE CONVERTERS

Babel Fish <http://babelfish.altavista.com>

Voila <http://trans.voila.fr>

Prompt www.translate.ru

T-Mail www.t-mail.com

Foreignword <http://www.foreignword.com>

Google www.google.com

Gist-In-Time www.teletranslator.com

